

THE RAILWAY

GORDON

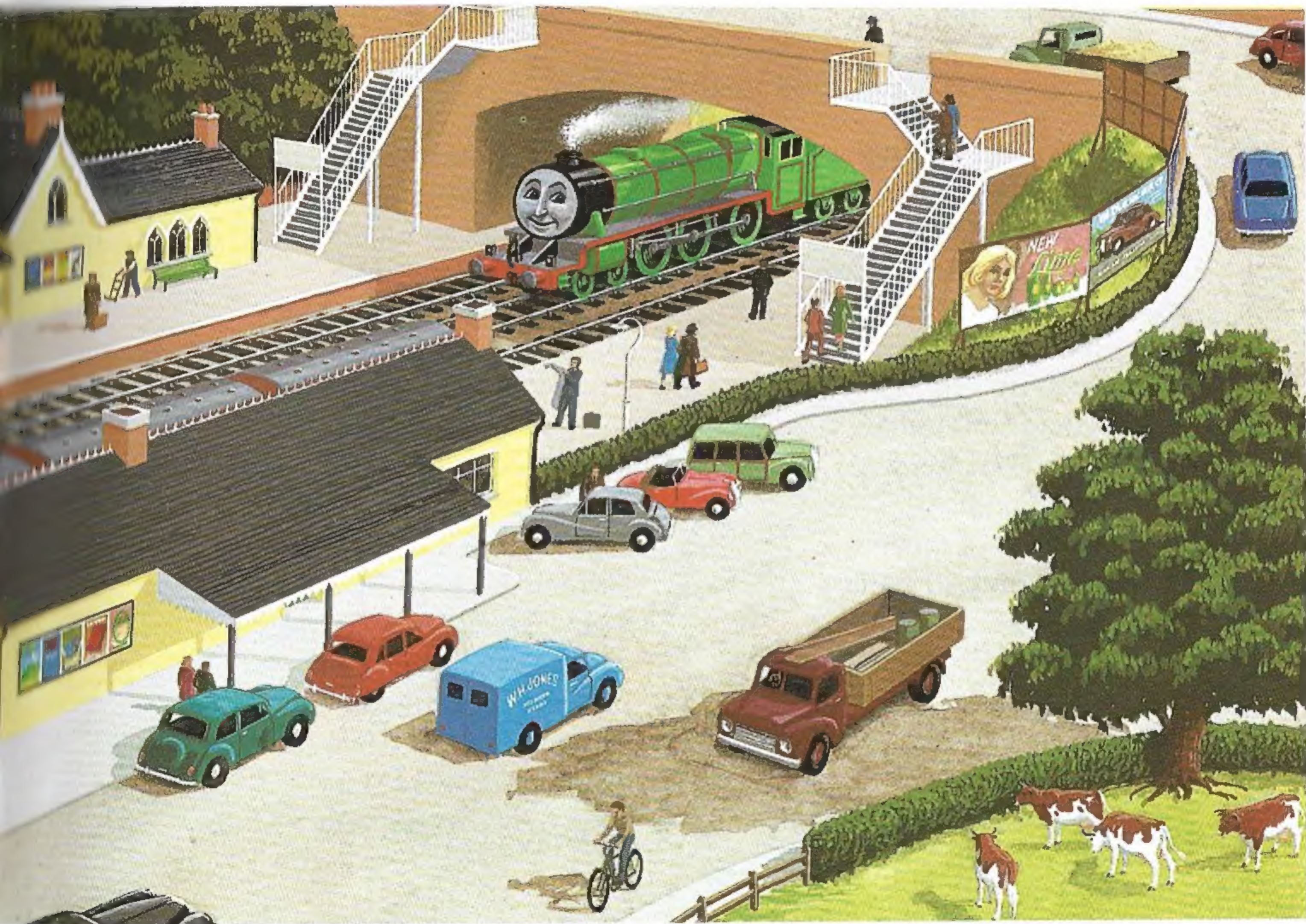
SERIES NO. 31

The High-Speed Engine



CHRISTOPHER AWDRY





Titles in this series

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
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| 2. Thomas the Tank Engine | 21. Main Line Engines |
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Gordon
The High-Speed Engine

CHRISTOPHER AWDRY

with illustrations by

CLIVE SPONG

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DEAR FRIENDS

Over here on the Other Railway we are used to High-Speed Trains, and know how useful they can be. But when Gordon first heard of them he began boasting about how fast he could go. He should have known better, because he only landed himself in disgrace and made the Fat Controller cross. These stories tell how hard Gordon worked to redeem himself and make the Fat Controller think again.

THE AUTHOR

High-Speed Gordon

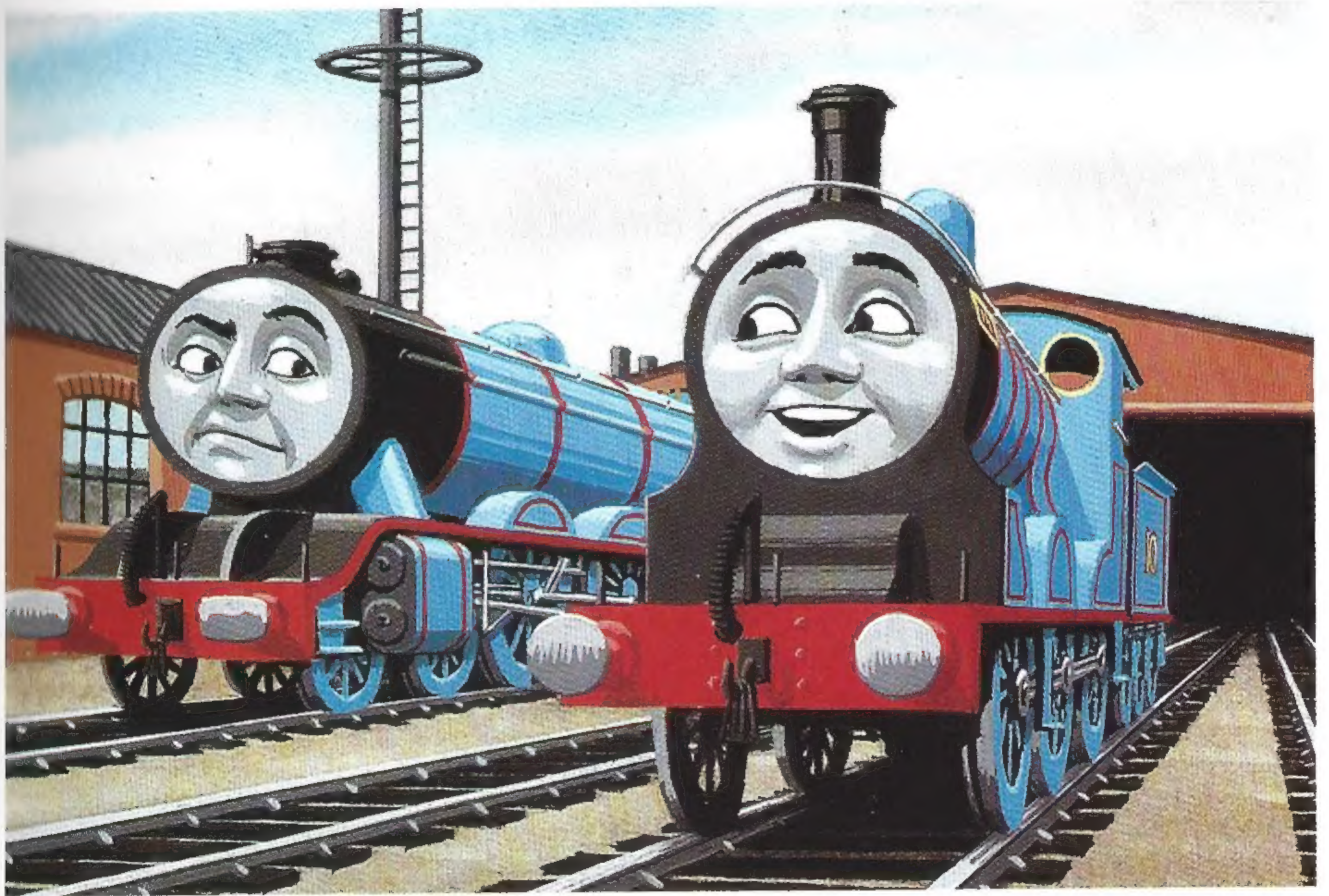
DONALD was excited.

‘The diesels at yon Wurrks,’ he announced, ‘say that on the Other Railway there are things called High-Speed Trains. They have a diesel engine at each end, and can go at 125 miles an hour.’

Gordon snorted.

‘An engine at each end,’ he said scornfully. ‘There’s only one of me, but I bet I can go as fast as those smelly boxes-on-wheels. Probably faster,’ he added.

The others said nothing. They had heard Gordon’s boasting before.

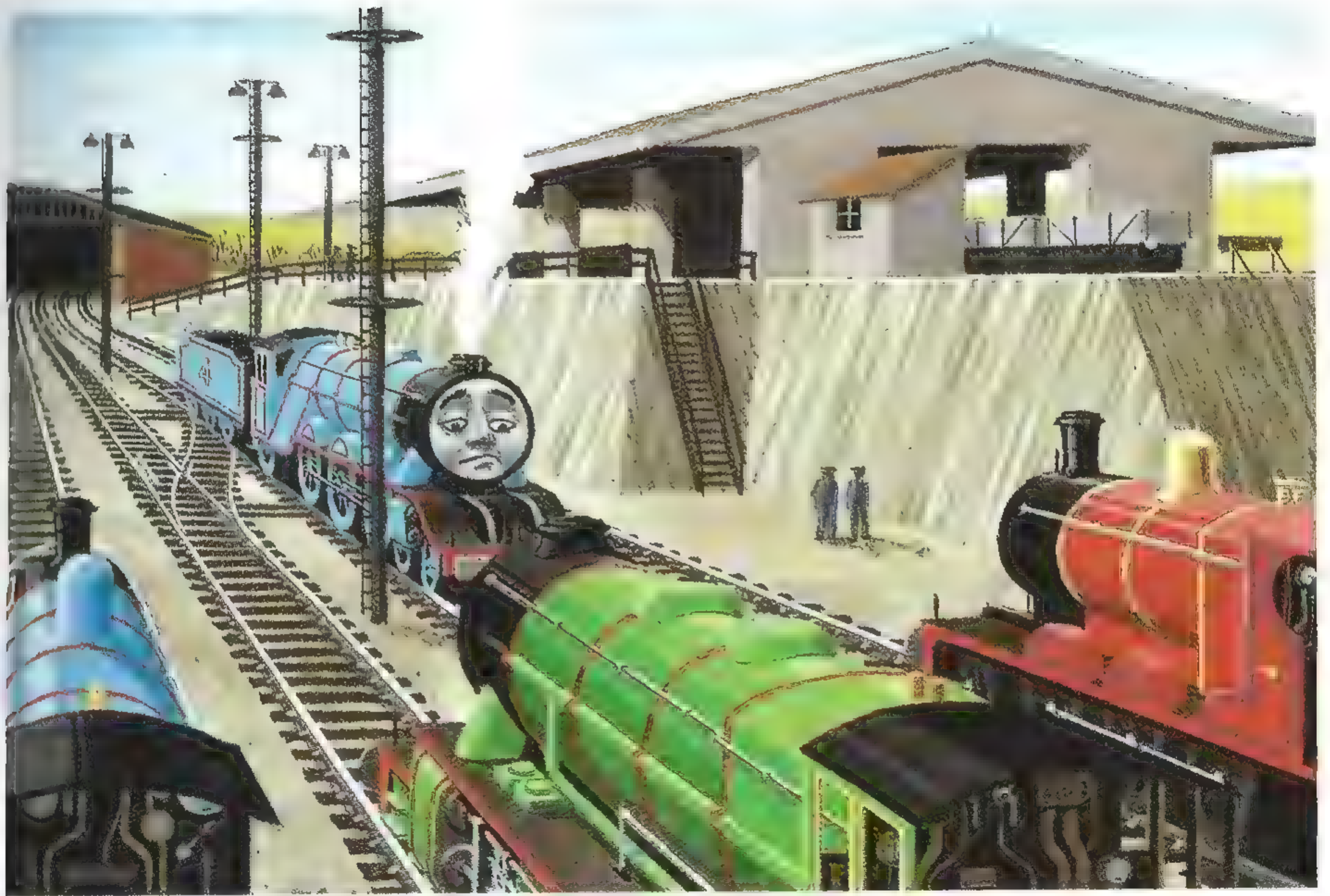


Gordon was still bragging the next morning.

‘Speed’s nothing to me,’ he said. ‘Why, one of my Doncaster cousins went at 126 miles an hour. I’ll show these diesels a thing or two, just you wait and see.’

He puffed grandly towards the station.

Gordon normally pulled the Express, though Henry, James or Bear helped if Gordon was ill or away. Many visitors came to see the Fat Controller’s Railway. They often used the Express, so it was usually full and heavy.



There had been frost during the night, and now the weather was wet and sleety. Sleet settled on the rails making an icy film across their surface.

The carriages of the Express stood under the cover of the station roof, but when Gordon was coupled to them his cab and front end had to stand outside.

He grew colder and colder as he waited for the Guard to blow his whistle and wave his green flag.

‘Come on,’ he shivered impatiently. ‘Let’s get started.’



At last Gordon heard the whistle.

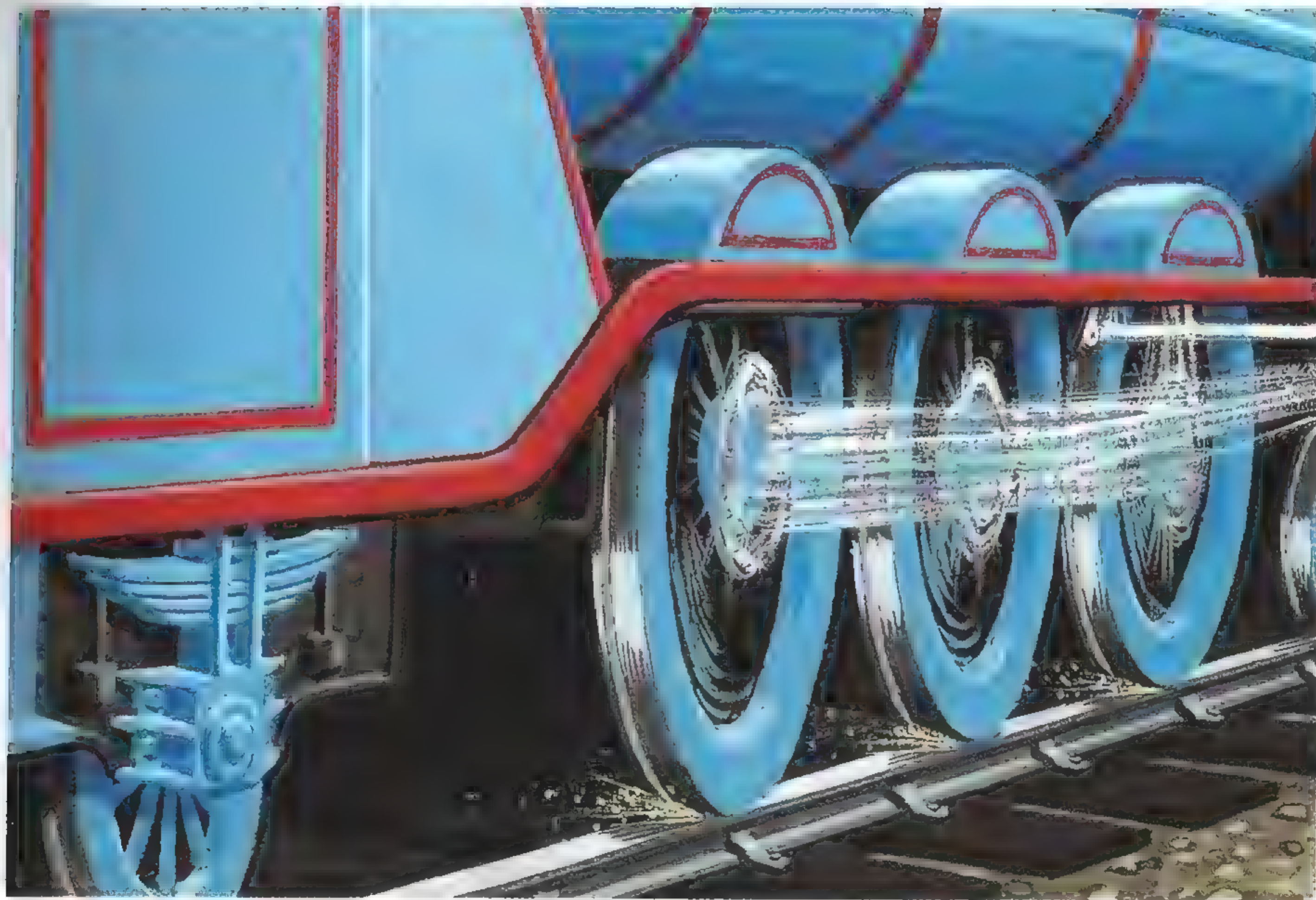
‘Come on, come on, come on come on come on,’ he shouted, as he tried to pull quickly away.

But his wheels slipped on the icy rails. The sudden movement made water in his boiler surge forward, and Gordon’s driver could not shut off steam. Gordon moved a yard and slithered to a standstill, held back by the heavy train. His wheels spun furiously, but neither Gordon nor his train budged an inch.



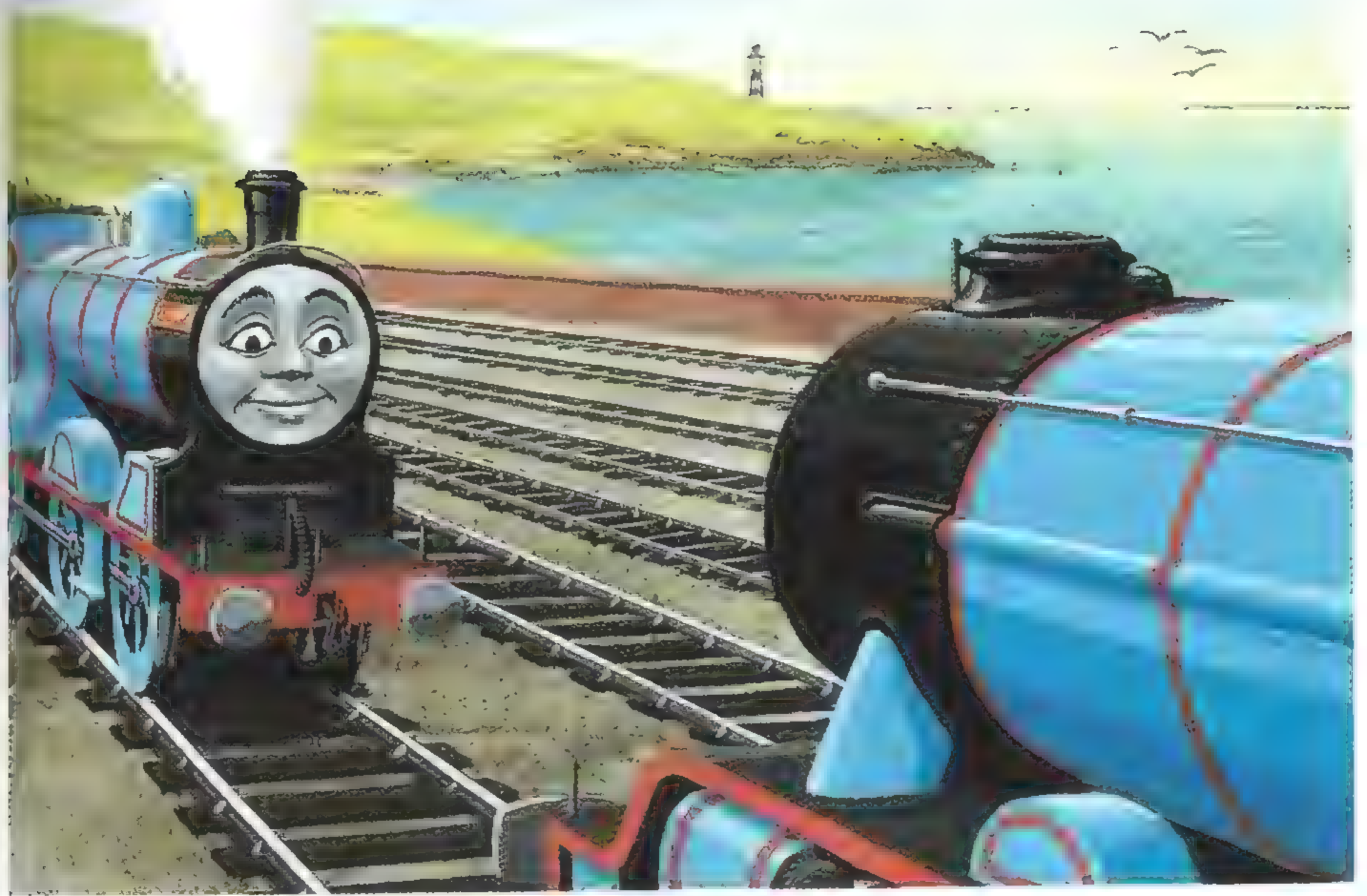
‘Help, help!’ wailed Gordon despairingly, but nobody could. His wheels spun until his rods ached, but he could do nothing to stop them.

His driver tried every trick he knew. An Inspector came and tried some more, but it was no good. The Fat Controller came to see what the fuss was about. He said several things to Gordon, but Gordon was making so much noise that he couldn’t hear them. Sparks showered from the rails, but Gordon’s wheels went on spinning.



It was a quarter of an hour before Gordon had used up all his steam. Reduced pressure allowed the driver to close the regulator, and with a deep sigh of relief Gordon felt his wheels stop turning. The silence was amazing!

Donald came to take Gordon to the Shed, and Henry came to pull the Express. When the train had gone, workmen had to replace the rails where Gordon had been standing, because his spinning wheels had worn deep grooves in them.



The Shed was empty. Donald tactfully remembered another job and left Gordon on his own. But that night Gordon heard a whisper from close by.

‘Did you hear,’ it hissed, ‘how Gordon went for a spin today?’

There was a quiet chuckle. Gordon seethed in silence.

‘High-Speed Engines are all very well,’ the whisper went on, ‘but Gordon ought to know by now that he’s supposed to move his train too.’

Gordon snorted disgustedly, and with a gasp the whisperer subsided into silence.



Smokescreen

GORDON was feeling 'stuffed-up'.

'It's the coal, Gordon,' explained his fireman. 'It's clogging up your tubes something awful. But we'll have to make do with it, for there's nothing else.'

'Why not have a good sneeze, Gordon?' suggested Henry, thinking of the time when he had punished some boys for dropping stones on him. 'That will clear your tubes.'

'Certainly not,' replied Gordon with dignity. 'The Fat Controller wouldn't approve. He didn't like your sneeze, I seem to remember.'



Next day Gordon was nervous as he backed onto the Express.

‘At least I shan’t slip today,’ he thought, ‘but I suppose they’ll laugh at me again if I don’t keep time.’

He needn’t have worried. By the time he reached the Junction he was running nicely, and as he approached Edward’s station Gordon’s fireman began to make up the fire.

‘Let’s get a good run at the hill while you’ve steam to do it,’ he said. ‘I don’t trust this low-grade coal.’



At the station a party of wedding guests, all in their best clothes, was standing on the platform. As Gordon swooshed through, running hard for the hill, smoke from the newly-made fire streamed from his funnel. He disappeared into the distance and left a black smokescreen settling over the station. It covered everything, wedding guests and all, in a coat of soot and smuts. Waves to Gordon became shaking fists, and the wedding party hurried angrily to the Stationmaster's office.



At the end of the line an Inspector came to see Gordon. His message from the Fat Controller was short but not sweet.

‘It’s not fair,’ Gordon complained to BoCo. ‘How could I help that smoke? It’s not my fault the coal’s dirty.’

‘Never mind,’ said BoCo encouragingly. ‘Where would I be if I got upset every time someone called me smelly? Anyhow, soot’s good for the garden, my driver says.’

‘But not for new clothes,’ muttered Gordon.



Gordon was extra-careful on the way home, but it wasn't his lucky day.

The Fat Controller had broken a journey to the Other Railway to apologize to the people at Edward's station. He had done his best, and was waiting for another train when Gordon came by. As the Express thundered through, a cloud of something flew from it and landed on the Fat Controller's new top-hat

When Gordon reached the Big Station there was another message waiting for him.



‘The Fat Controller says,’ announced the Inspector, ‘that Gordon blew ashes on his top-hat as he passed Edward’s station.’

Gordon was horrified.

‘Wheeeeeesh!’ he exclaimed indignantly. ‘I did not. I was being extra-careful.’

‘I’m sure the Fat Controller can’t be right,’ put in Gordon’s fireman.

‘I can’t help it,’ said the Inspector. ‘That’s what he says, so there it is. He will speak to Gordon when he gets home.’

Gordon went sadly back to the Shed.



Fire Escape

‘DRIVER says the Fat Controller’s coming home tomorrow,’ said James a week later.

Gordon grunted. He wasn’t anxious to see the Fat Controller.

‘I must do well today,’ he said to himself as he waited to start the Express. ‘A good run today might help, if the Fat Controller hears about it.’

Things did not begin well, though. Thanks to a last-minute passenger they were late starting, which meant that Gordon missed his path at the Junction, and was delayed there too.



But with a clear run after that, they flashed through Edward's station, going splendidly. They were halfway up the hill when there was a clatter beneath Gordon's cab. Suddenly he felt a blast of cold air in his middle, as if there were a gap between his boiler and cab.

'Oooooof!' he gasped. 'What's happened?'

The fireman looked at his fire: there was a gaping hole in the middle, where the firebars had collapsed and a large part of the fire had disappeared.



‘You’ve lost part of your fire, Gordon,’ the fireman explained. ‘What a place to do it!’

Already Gordon was feeling weaker. Without a full fire his steam pressure and speed fell quickly.

But his driver knew what to do.

‘Find the biggest piece of coal you can, and put it across the hole,’ he told the fireman. ‘That will stop some of the cold air from getting in, and we’ll be able to hold steam better. But hurry, or the hill will beat us!’



The fireman hurried. A large lump of coal lay near the front of the tender. Quickly he moved it into place with his shovel and a long steel bar. Gordon felt better at once.

‘Now build the fire gently round the edges,’ said the driver, and, as the fireman did so, the driver adjusted Gordon’s controls to make the best use of his steam.

‘Right Gordon,’ he said when the fireman had finished. ‘Now it’s up to you.’



Gordon tried his hardest, but it was tough going.

‘I must do it, I must do it,’ he told himself as he pounded up the hill. He had stuck here once before, and was determined not to fail again.

Poor Gordon was getting very breathless.

‘I will do it, I will do it,’ he panted, but he was careful not to pant too loudly in case he blew away what was left of his fire. He shut his eyes and struggled on.



At last Gordon felt that the slope was easier to climb. Cautiously he opened one eye: yes, he was nearly at the top.

‘I’ve done it, I’ve done it,’ he gasped triumphantly. The fireman mopped his brow.

‘That was splendid, Gordon,’ he said, ‘and now you deserve a rest.’

A signalman turned them into a goods loop, and telephoned the Works for a pilot engine to be prepared. While they waited, the passengers got out and told Gordon what a Useful Engine he was.



BoCo was at the Works to help, and the two engines finished the journey without further trouble. At the end of the line the Fat Controller was waiting for them. To Gordon's surprise he was smiling.

'Thank you BoCo,' he said, 'and thank you Gordon for a splendid effort. I am pleased with your work today, though certain ... ahem ... other things leave much...'

But just then a whistle blew, and the Fat Controller had to hurry to his carriage. Once again poor Gordon was left in suspense.



Gordon Proves His Point

ONE day Gordon reached the Big Station on the Mainland to find the platform crowded.

‘It’s a Railtour,’ explained his driver. ‘Going along the coast line to Carlisle, I think.’

The Stationmaster came up.

‘Can you help?’ he asked. ‘These Railtour people are stuck because their train has failed. Could Gordon take them in his train, please?’

Gordon’s driver laughed.

‘You’ll have to hold him back, eh Gordon?’ he said. ‘But you need the Fat Controller’s permission – and what about our return train?’



The Fat Controller agreed at once, and then the Stationmaster rang the Shed.

‘What can you substitute for Gordon’s Express?’ he asked.

‘There’s the High-Speed Train that came yesterday,’ they suggested. ‘It’s only got one power-car working, but it should keep the Fat Controller’s timing.’

Philippa (she preferred Pip for short) and Emma were delighted to stand in for Gordon. Pip’s cooling system was faulty, making her hot and bothered, but Emma didn’t mind doing all the work. They felt honoured to visit the Fat Controller’s Railway.

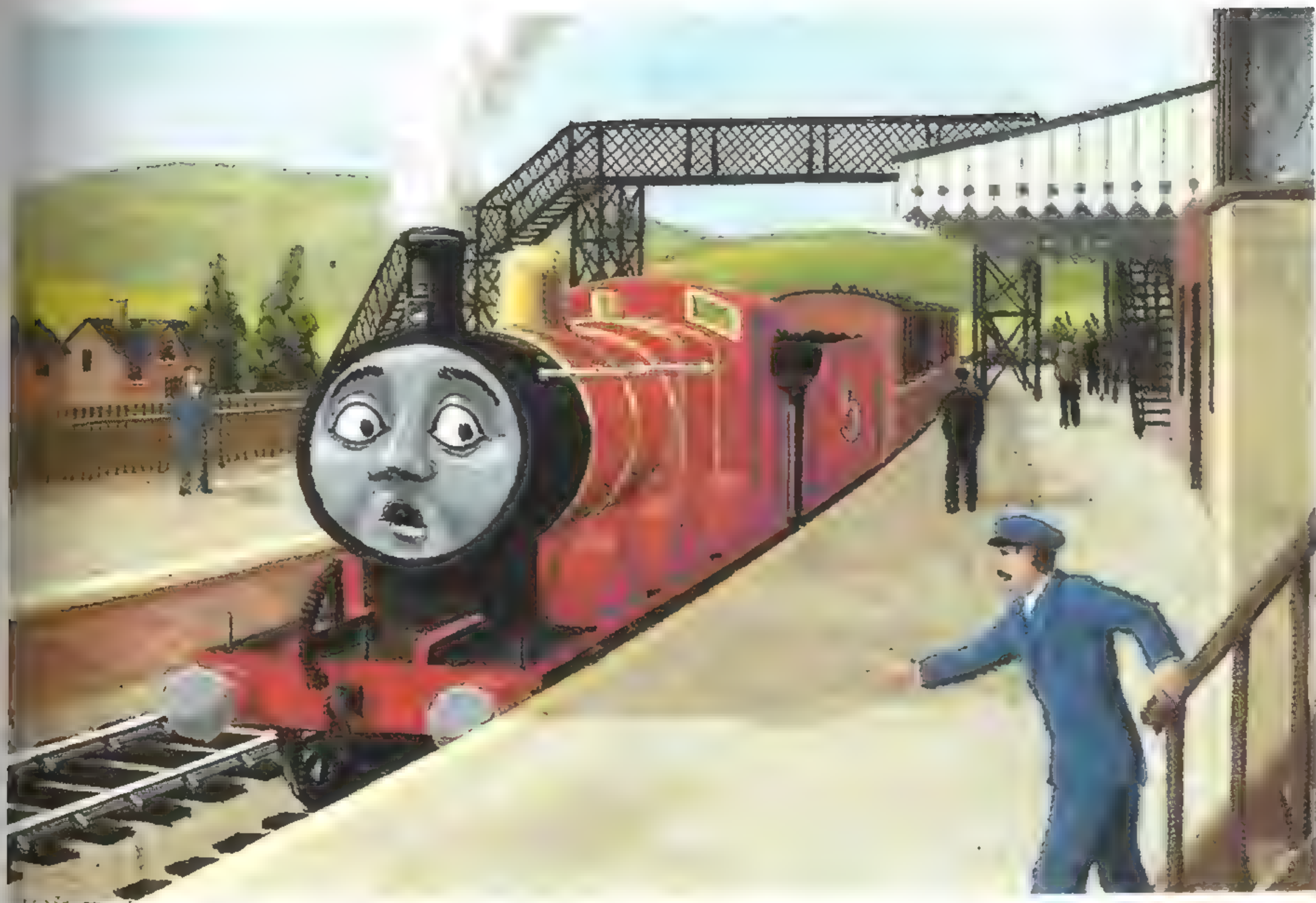


James, following a little later with a stopping train, was surprised when the signalman at the station beyond the Works came up.

‘That High-Speed diesel’s failed,’ he said. ‘Go gently until you reach it, push it to the next loop, and then go round in front to pull it home.’

‘Phew!’ remarked James. ‘But what about the Express passengers? They won’t want to make our stops.’

‘Too bad,’ said the signalman. ‘Better that way than your people missing their stations.’



James found the failed train about two miles in front. He pushed it to the next station, and then got ready to pull.

‘I’m sorry I can’t help,’ apologised Emma, who was in front, ‘but we *are* special lightweight coaches.’

‘That’s lucky,’ said James, who was already feeling puffed. But he found it easier than he expected: once the train was moving the coaches followed smoothly. As for the passengers, if they wondered about the extra stops, they didn’t complain.



That Fat Controller met them.

‘I’m sorry we’re late, Sir,’ said James.

‘That’s all right, James,’ said the Fat Controller. ‘I’m pleased with you – you have saved an Awkward Situation. Now, please make Pip and Emma welcome in the Shed while I arrange their journey home.’

The other engines were quiet at first, but they soon found the diesels friendly, and before long they were all laughing together. James was glad Gordon was away – he might, he thought, so easily have said something to upset them.



Gordon came home next day. The Fat Controller forgave him for his smokescreen, and said that he was sorry for thinking his spoiled top-hat had been Gordon's fault. It had, he explained, been a steward emptying an ashtray from a carriage window.

'Now, Gordon,' he continued, 'while you were in Carlisle we borrowed a High-Speed Train. This has failed, and I want you to take her passengers home.' He paused and smiled. 'Show them how *we* do things, eh?'

'I certainly will,' promised Gordon.



‘Right,’ said Gordon’s driver as they backed towards the train. ‘Today, Gordon my lad, you can have the run of your life.’

He did too.

Douglas was waiting to pull Pip and Emma home when Gordon passed.

‘Poop, poop, poop,’ whistled Gordon proudly, and with a swish and a roar he was gone. Pip and Emma watched enviously.

Douglas chuckled.

‘Och,’ he said to himself, ‘yon Gordon’s aye a High-Speed engine, but it’s me who’s pulling the High-Speed Train.’







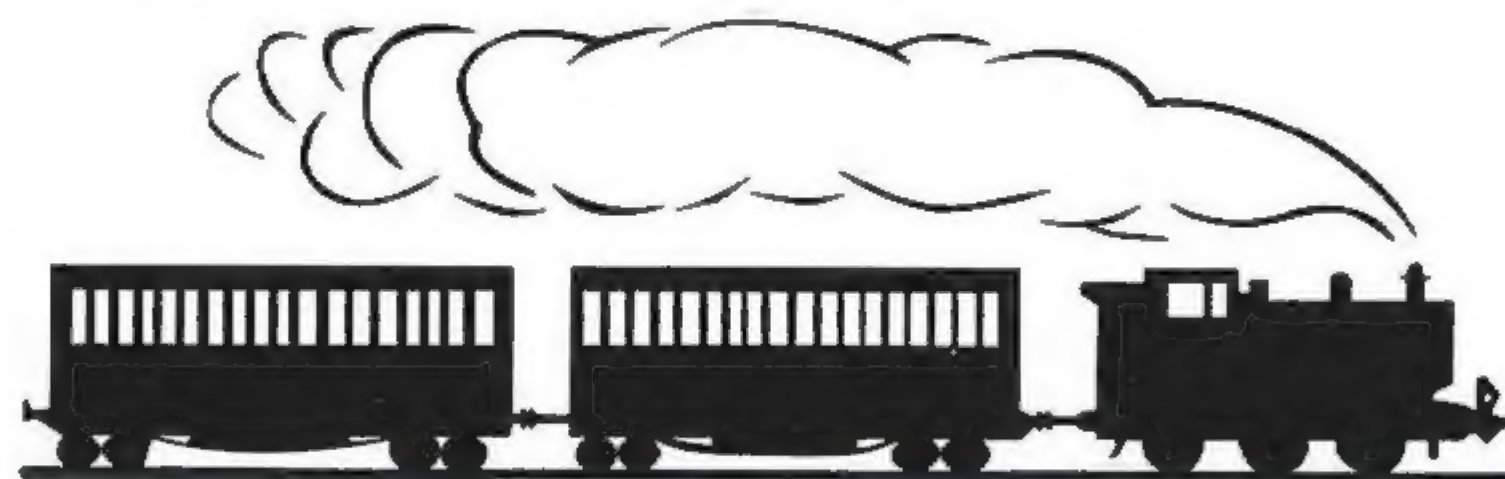
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Gordon the High-Speed Engine

CHRISTOPHER AWDRY

Gordon wasn't satisfied with being 'the Big Engine'—he wanted to be the fastest engine as well. When he heard that the Other Railway had diesels which ran at 125 miles an hour, he thought he could travel even faster than that. Gordon tried hard, but mostly seemed to be in trouble until one day the High-Speed Train broke down...



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